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SENIOR WHITE HOUSE OFFICIALS TO DISCUSS PREVENTING LEAKS

By W. Dale Nelson
WASHINGTON

The White House is preparing for a meeting of high-level officials to discuss tightened procedures for preventing leaks of classified national security information, an administration official said today.

The official, speaking on condition of anonymity, said papers had been prepared by the National Security Council staff and distributed to officials of other agencies for their information and possible comment.

The source said no date had been set for the meeting, which will be attended by officials of government agencies and departments concerned with national security.

"A number of papers were prepared in preparation for a senior-level meeting, which has not yet taken place," the official said. "The papers were meant as an effort to provide background material for the principals who would attend the meeting, as well as to solicit ideas for better ways to protect classified information whose dissemination could possibly be injurious to national security." CIA Director William J. Casey has raised the possibility of taking action, under a 1950 law not previously applied to the press, to prosecute news organizations that reveal communications intelligence.

The anonymous official said no decisions had been made on any issues, such as whether lie detector tests should be used to identify government officials who leak classified information.

President Reagan signed an order in December requiring thousands of government workers and contractor personnel with access to highly classified information to take routine polygraph tests. Casey supported the idea, but Secretary of State George P. Shultz said he would resign if ever required to take such a test. Reagan said he would not be.

Casey has said that he referred to the Justice Department for possible prosecution an NBC report on Monday concerning the trial of accused spy Ronald W. Pelton. He said the report, if true, violated the 1950 law "against

publishing any classified information concerning the communications intelligence activities of the United States." The CIA has also been reviewing an article published in The Washington Post on Wednesday saying Pelton had compromised an intelligence operation that used a "high-technology device" to monitor Soviet communications. The Post said it withheld some details from the story after appeals from Casey and other officials.

White House spokesman Larry Speakes has said it would be up to the Justice Department whether to prosecute such cases if asked to do so by Casey, and the White House would not intervene.